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AN AGENDA FOR PEACE: PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY, PEACEMAKING AND PEACE-KEEPING

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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REPLIES RECEIVED FROM INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVING RECEIVED A STANDING INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SESSIONS AND THE WORK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AS OBSERVERS

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Commonwealth Secretariat

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[15 July 1993]

1. Unlike the United Nations, the Commonwealth has no formal charter. The principles that guide the association have been articulated in major declarations over the years, notably in the 1971 Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles and in the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration. At both Singapore and Harare, and on several other occasions, Commonwealth leaders have emphasized that international peace and order and the rule of international law are essential to the security and prosperity of mankind. It has been the practice for Commonwealth leaders at the Heads of the Government Meetings to make pronouncements on security-related issues as well as to establish, whenever they have judged necessary, mechanisms aimed at assisting in the maintenance of peace and the resolution of disputes. They have done this, for example, through the establishment of the Commonwealth Action Group on Cyprus, the Ministerial Group on Belize and the Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa.

2. Although the Commonwealth has tended not to be directly involved in peace-keeping operations, its activities over the past three decades have occasionally included, in a discreet manner, and in response to requests from the concerned member Governments, use of the good offices of the Commonwealth Secretary-General to defuse potential or actual conflict situations. To that extent, a Commonwealth role in preventive diplomacy and peace-building is not precluded.

3. The Commonwealth has some comparative advantage in undertaking bridge-building roles within its own family of nations - for example, the use of a common language, shared traditions, the commonality of instructions, the convention of consensus in decision-making - which provide distinctive attributes affording the Commonwealth a capacity for the harmonization of views among member countries. The Commonwealth commitment to pluralism and its own diverse membership further facilitate such a role.

4. The Commonwealth Secretariat works closely with the United Nations and its specialized agencies across a broad spectrum of social, political and economic issues. Cooperation with the United Nations is pursued through the Secretariat's observer status in the General Assembly. There is constant and close interaction between officials of both organizations. At Harare, Commonwealth leaders once again underscored the need for continuing Commonwealth support to the United Nations.

5. It may be pertinent to recall that, in response to Security Council resolution 772 (1992), the Commonwealth has deployed, since October 1992, a Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa which works closely with the United Nations and other observer groups, as well as with the structures established under the National Peace Accord, in efforts to arrest the cycle of violence and promote a climate favourable to the resumption of constitutional negotiations.

6. The Commonwealth Heads of Government remain committed to utilizing the consensus-building ability of the Commonwealth for the benefit of its membership

and the wider global society. At their forthcoming meeting in Cyprus, they will no doubt seek to harness this ability in an effort to assist the United Nations, now approaching its fiftieth anniversary, to realize better the aims and objectives of its Charter.